(c) All major countries, including the USA and Russia, criticised these tests and stated that they would aggravate the situation in the region rather than defuse tensions. Government stated that "India is not particularly impressed by these missile antics, clearly targeted at the domestic audience in Pakistan".

Removal of restriction imposed on entry of Pakistani aircrafts

†945. SHRI P.K. MAHESHWARI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have taken a decision to remove restriction imposed on entry of Pakistani aircrafts into the Indian air space by amending its foreign policy with regard to Pakistan:

(b) if so, whether the decision to remove the restriction has been taken due to America's pressure:

(c) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(d) if not, the reasons for removing the said restriction together with Government's reaction in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) to (d) Pakistan President General Musharraf had committed on May 27 and June 6 to end cross-border infiltration and on a permanent basis. On June 10, in recognition of this commitment, Government of India had announced the removal of restrictions on over-flights by Pakistani aircraft that had been in place since January 2002, following the attack on our Parliament.

Meeting between India and European Union

946. SHRI AIMADUDDIN AHMED KHAN (DURRU): Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether an official level meeting as held in New Delhi between India and European Union on May 1, 2002 to review the relations; and

(b) if so, the progress made so far to improve relations with the European Union?

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) and (b) An India-EU Troika Senior Officials Meeting took place on 2nd May 2002 in New Delhi at Foreign Secretary level as part of the institutionalized dialogue with the EU. Apart from being India's largest trading partner, India and EU have a shared strategic partnership based on commitment to democracy and rule of law as well as promotion of socio-economic development and prosperity. The strength of the relationship is reflected in the institutionalization of annual summits between India and the European Union.

Sponsor for issuance of visas

947. SHRI SUNIL SHASTRI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the names of the countries who insist for a sponsor before issuing visas to Indian Nationals;

(b) whether Government also propose to adopt similar rules/policy while issuing visas to foreign nationals; and

(c) if not, the reasons thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) to (c) The information is being collected and will be laid on the table of the house.

Haj Act

948. SHRI K. RAHMAN KHAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Haj Bill passed by Parliament has received assent of the President; and

(b) if so, by when the Haj Act is going to be notified for implementation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) The Haj Bill was pased by Parliament as the Haj Committee Act 2002 (35 of 2002) and was assented to by the President on June 11, 2002.